

Together

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Summary: Quick Saigerou fluff after their skirmish with the Mokushujin.

Together

"Why do you always do that?"

"What?" Saizo turned around, and saw Kagero standing in the doorway to his tent.

Kagero made an almost undetectable gesture with her head that only someone as familiar with her as Saizo could see. "Touch your scar."

He snorted at that, then turned back to the simple chest that stood in the corner of his tent. "Because it hurts. Why else?" Unconsciously, he reached up and touched the base of the ragged mark. It was warmer than the rest of his face, like always.

Kagero observed him for a moment. The distance of Saizo's tent from the rest of the Hoshidan army grounds was a thankful barrier between the two of them and the noise that the others could bring. No doubt Lady Hinoka would be delivering instructions on where they would go next, and Lady Sakura would be healing and providing support to the army. Lord Takumi would be motivating the troops as well, and Lord Corrin — who she'd only met today — would be taking notes on the army.

All was well, except for Lord Ryoma.

"Why do you insist on wearing your mask?"

This time, Saizo did not turn around. After a moment, he responded, "Why do you keep asking pointless questions that I've answered countless times?" Kagero could hear his irritation, but that was

normal for him.

She shrugged, even though he wasn't looking. Saizo would know, though. "I felt like asking."

Saizo took off the point of contention between the two and laid it on the floor next to him. He rubbed the lower half of his face, then said gruffly, "Because the fewer Nohrians that see my face, the better."

It was an answer, but it wasn't the truth. Both of them knew that, but neither wanted to say it aloud where the night air might twist their words.

She moved to a chair of his; a strong, sturdy seat that Kagero knew came from his home village of Igasato. Kagero did not ask for the prickly man's permission to sit down, knowing the answer already. There were certain things that came with knowing another for as long as they had, and being able to know each other's state of mind was one of them.

"You are upset." Saizo spoke quietly, but the silence around them made his words all the more louder. She hid a small, sad smile. There were certain things, too, that came with being ex-lovers as they were. It was always so easy for him to anticipate her answers and her feelings. Sometimes Saizo was better at knowing her than Kagero was herself.

"I am," she admitted freely, for she was. He took off his waist armour, also laying it beside him. "Over our lord," Saizo spoke again. Again, he knew the exact cause of her unhappiness.

Kagero looked at his back as he ran his hands through his hair to clear out the tangles. It was a broad, muscled back. She knew intimately how free of scars and blemishes Saizo's body was, and it was a testament to his skill and talent as a ninja that he had managed to be a retainer to the high prince for so many years without suffering any grievous hurts.

He turned around suddenly, one knee on the ground and the other up. "It wasn't your fault," Saizo said sharply. "Those damn Mokushujin bastards were-"

"'Those damn Mokushujin bastards' were far more powerful than me." Kagero was blunt with Saizo like she was with no one else. "I was overpowered and out of my league, Saizo. I haven't felt that useless since I was a child."

Saizo snorted and stood up, moving closer to her. "Listen."

He crossed his arms as he stood right in front of her. Kagero watched his good eye blink slowly. "You may have been captured by the Mokushujin, but I'm partially to blame for that. I was the one who proposed us going our separate ways to find our lord. If we hadn't separated, maybe Lord Ryoma would be here with us."

Saizo's bad eye "the one with the scar" fluttered open. It was milky white like tofu liquid before it curdled, and Kagero knew that Saizo could no more see out of it than she could fly through the air. It was more of a tool for punctuation and emphasis, his bad eye.

"It is not your fault," he repeated. "It is mine. Lay no blame on yourself, Kagero." And just like that, all the pressure clamping down on her shoulders was gone. "Thank you, Saizo-" she began, then he grunted as he turned away. "Now, leave. It's late, and we march at dawn."

She stifled a smile, but did not move. He glanced towards his partner, one eyebrow raised. "Did you not hear me?"

Coolly, Kagero replied, "What if I wish to spend the night in your tent?" No sooner had the sentence left her mouth, she instantly regretted it. She could just imagine Orochi scolding her disapprovingly. _"You already put an end to your relationship with him,"_ she'd say, _"Don't open yourself to more heartbreak, my dear. Even the cards cannot predict if Saizo and you are to be together."_ Then again, Orochi had never taken to Saizo â€" but that was hardly saying much. The man's abrasive personality left much to be desired for some. Kagero, however, was perfectly fine with it.

She was so caught up in her thoughts that she nearly didn't hear Saizo reply. "Then you'd best bring your own pallet. Mine's far too small to share."

Kagero was shocked for a moment that Saizo would be so forthright, then laughed gently. "Were you always this forward?" He snorted at that, dismissing her statement as if it were nothing. "Not when we were dating, no."

Ah, yes, their ended relationship. She had been thinking about it, but Saizo had brought it up into the night air.

Kagero tried something daring and hoped that she wouldn't regret the move. "Do you wish that we still were? Dating, I mean." Her words came out slightly more flustered than she'd like, but the other ninja didn't seem to notice the sudden change in her normally cool persona (or at least, he didn't let on that he'd noticed).

He scowled suddenly as he bent down to retrieve his mask from the floor. "I've no wish to recall what might have been." Saizo hid his heavy thoughts from her, hoping that his once-lover would not try and pursue their relationship again. He wasn't sure if he could stand another heartbreak if their second try was unsuccessful.

"Now, come," he said, "Leave my tent. We must awake early tomorrow, and it is late. The sooner we can march and find our lord, the better."

Now, Kagero did stand up, and Saizo breathed a quiet sigh of relief. He was glad that she was leaving. As much as he enjoyed her silent presence, it troubled him how their once-companionable silence had developed into a tense, awkward one.

Then suddenly she slipped up behind him and rested her head gently on his back. He didn't move, but instead relaxed. There was something about Kagero that put him at ease, even if they were arguing or at odds with one another.

As suddenly as she had came, Kagero slipped out of his tent with nothing more than a "Goodnight, Saizo." He hesitated for a moment,

then whirled around and called out, "Kagero, wait!"

She paused mid-run. "Yes?"

Saizo nodded, determination flaring in his eye. "Let's find Lord Ryoma, together!"

Kagero grinned at that.

"Together."

End
file.